



Tips for Parents of Preschoolers

(3-5 years)

DELAYED POTTY TRAINING

It is not uncommon for children to still rely on diapers at night until age 7. It's common for previously potty trained children to have accidents during times of stress or change (moving, new sibling, etc.).

INSTEAD OF ...

TRY...

Forcing your child to sit on the toilet against their will

Punishing your child or showing disappointment

- (Gently): "I notice you are holding yourself [or pacing back and forth]. Try sitting on the potty."
- If your child soils themselves, say, "It happens. It will happen less over time."

EXAGGERATING THE TRUTH

This is normal in preschoolers because of their active imaginations. Pretending and imagining are important to a child's development.

INSTEAD OF ...

TRY...

Calling your child a liar

Punishing your child for lying

- "I wonder if you are afraid to tell me what happened."
- "I wonder if you really don't want to..." The more children are punished, the more likely they are to lie. Avoid using punishment. Talk about better solutions to their problem than using lying.

TALKING CONSTANTLY AND ASKING "WHY?" FREQUENTLY

A child's curiosity about the world helps to build concepts, vocabulary, and understanding.

INSTEAD OF...

TRY...

Labeling them as nosy and/or telling them to be quiet, hush, or shut up

Brushing your child off and not answering

- Asking your child, "What do you think?" This turns the "why" question around so your child has a chance to think and come up with their own answer.
- "Let's [read] this [book]!" or "Let's play [! You might need to let your child know that you need quiet for a little while to help you feel calm.]

HAVING MANY FEARS (THE DARK, GOING TO BED, MONSTERS, ANIMALS)

INSTEAD OF SAYING...

TRY...

"Don't be a baby."

"Don't be afraid." or "You better stay in your bed or the monsters will get you."

"Big boys and girls aren't scared."

- "It's OK to have fears. Let's figure this out together."
- Mirroring your child's feelings: "You feel afraid. Maybe a nightlight would feel better." Give your child a flashlight or monster spray to help them confront or overcome fears.
- "It's hard to be scared. Tell me what scares you." or "I can see that you are afraid. I can see this bothers you. I can see being in the dark frightens you. Can I turn on a nightlight?"

BEING CURIOUS ABOUT PRIVATE PARTS AND ASKING QUESTIONS

INSTEAD OF ...

TRY...

Shaming the child for touching their private parts

Using slang terms (e.g., cookie, bird, pocketbook)

Making your child hug and kiss when they don't want to

- Teaching your child it's OK to touch their own private parts when they are alone.
- Teaching your child about all body parts including penis, vagina, butt, breasts.
- Teaching them to offer a fistbump or handshake.

WON'T GO TO BED

A consistent early bedtime routine every day and a safe sleeping space are keys to a happy bedtime.

INSTEAD OF SAYING...

TRY...

"Go to bed now!"

"If you get out of bed, you will be punished."

- "Do you want to walk or tiptoe to bed?"
- Make going to bed an enjoyable experience. Learn what helps your child go to sleep. Consider their sensory needs. Do they like dark and quiet, or do they prefer light and sounds of the ocean? Do they need a heavy blanket?
- "Let's read a book."
- "It's 8 o'clock and you are in bed already, well done!" Provide a consistent and enjoyable routine every night.

Dear Parents,

Did you know that –



- Spanking **shrinks brains.**

Harvard Medical School found that kids who are spanked just once a month had **14-19% smaller brains in the decision-making area.**¹ These were children who remembered being spanked at least 12 times a year and once with a belt, paddle or brush, but were not injured or spanked in anger.

- 1,574 studies found that **spanking is harmful.**

- Even ‘everyday spanking’ is **consistently associated with:**

- **More** aggression
- **More** negative relationships with parents
- **Lower** cognitive ability
- **Substance** abuse
- **More** fighting
- **Weaker** moral values
- **Delinquent** behavior
- **More** mental health problems
- **Lower** self-esteem
- **More** antisocial behavior
- **Lower** self-control²

- Spanking **lowers IQ.**

The University of New Hampshire found that American children who are spanked at ages 2-4 have **5 less IQ points** than non-spanked children, even years later. Children spanked at ages 5-9 have **2.8 less IQ points.**³

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Does this mean that everyone who was spanked as a child has problems?** No, it means that spanking doesn’t help children learn what we want them to learn. Every time we spank a child, we raise the risk that the child will develop problems.
- **Why is this so?** Spanking focuses on the behavior and misses the underlying need. It might stop a child from doing something in the moment, but the child hasn’t learned how to do things differently. And it can lead to built-up resentment and hostility, and prevent some children from telling about sexual abuse for fear of further punishment.
- **But I was spanked and turned out okay?** Today, we have a tremendous amount of knowledge about how children learn and develop. We know other ways of teaching children that don’t have these risks and harms.

Prepared, designed, and disseminated by:

Endorsed by:



1. Tomoda, A., Suzuki, H., Rabi, K., Sheu, Y., Polcari, A., & Teicher, M.H. (2010). Reduced prefrontal cortical gray matter in young adults exposed to harsh corporal punishment. *Neuroimage*, 47(Suppl. 2), T66–T71.

2. Gershoff, E. T., & Grogan-Kaylor, A. (2016). Spanking and child outcomes: Old controversies and new meta-analyses. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(4), 453–469. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/fam0000191>

3. Straus, M. & Paschall, M.J. Corporal punishment by mothers and development of children’s cognitive ability: A longitudinal study of two nationally representative age cohorts. (2009). *Journal of Aggression Maltreatment & Trauma*, 18(5): 459. doi:10.1080/10926770903035168

